

March 13, 2006: This Week in Congress

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Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Broadest Federal Anti-Meth Measures Pass Congress

This week I was pleased Congress passed the broadest ever anti-methamphetamine measures. The legislation sets a federal standard for addressing meth on all levels across the country.

This legislation will:

- Restrict the sale of necessary ingredients to make meth - Restricts sale of medicines containing pseudoephedrine, ephedrine and phenylpropanolamine (PPA) by placing them behind the counter, requiring purchasers to show identification and sign a logbook, and limiting individual purchases.
- Toughen criminal penalties - Toughens federal penalties against trafficking and smuggling, as well as producing or dealing meth in the presence of children.
- Provide critical resources to government and law enforcement agencies - Provides funding for training, enforcement, prosecution and environmental clean-up.

- Provide services for children affected by the spread of meth
- Provides grant funding for Drug Endangered Children rapid response teams to promote collaboration among federal, state and local agencies to assist and educate children that have been affected by meth.

Meth is destroying lives, families and communities - the lifeblood of rural America. Though it has been on the radar screen for years, this legislation takes a big picture approach to combating this dangerous drug from every angle, including production, trafficking and usage.

I announced the passage of this legislation in two press conferences at Kansas Regional Prevention Centers in Salina and Hays on Friday. Joining me in Salina were Kansas Methamphetamine Project Coordinator Cristi Cain, Salina Police Chief Jim Hill, Saline County Sheriff Glen Kochanowski, City Commissioners Alan Jilka and Abner Perney, City Manager Jason Gage and other city board members. Representing the Regional Prevention Center of North Central Kansas were CEO Les Sperling and Director Brenda Haaga. Mike Marshall with the Police Department, Annie Grevas with Community Corrections and Pat Ochs with Social and Rehabilitation Services were also present for the conference.

Joining me in Hays were Chief of Police Jim Braun, Ellis County Sheriff Ed Harbin, Ellis County Attorney Tom Drees, Fort Hays State University Kelly Center Director Bob Duffy, FHSU Chief of Police Ed Howell and High Plains Mental Health Center Director Walt Hill. Heather Winklepleck and several social workers and counselors from the Smoky Hill Foundation Regional Prevention Center were also on hand for the conference, as well as other local law enforcement officials. I appreciate the support from each community and especially the efforts of Heather in Hays and Brenda in Salina in coordinating the press conferences.

Supporting Legislation to Allow the President to Remove Unnecessary Spending

This week I sponsored legislation to allow the President to single out and remove unnecessary spending items that are part of larger pieces of legislation. By giving the President authority to evaluate and bring to light frivolous spending, the Legislative Line Item Veto Act would also serve as a deterrent to stop lawmakers from slipping unnecessary pet projects into bills at the last minute.

President Bush proposed this legislation in his 2006 State of the Union address. The governors of 43 of the 50 states already have this authority. Unlike the version of the line item veto that was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1998, the Legislative Line Item Veto Act requires congressional approval of all the items the President proposes to remove. The line item veto is an important tool our government can use to eliminate waste, ensure American taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely and reduce our country's debt.

Discussing Higher Education Issues with Big First Financial Aid Officials

On Thursday, I hosted a conference call with six financial aid officials from around the First Congressional District. In light of recent changes to higher education programs, I wanted to take this opportunity to learn from Kansas community colleges, public and private four-year colleges, and public universities. I want to make sure and bridge the gap between what happens in Congress and what goes on in the day-to-day lives of Kansans.

Participating in the call with me were Elaine Henrie, Director of Financial Aid at Emporia State University; Kathy Blau, Director of Financial Aid at Garden City Community College; Hortencia Villezcas, Director of Financial Aid at Southwest Kansas Technical School; Penny Nemechek, Financial Aid Coordinator at Northwest Kansas Technical College; Jodi Lightner, Financial Aid Coordinator at Sterling College; and Sherry Campbell, Director of Student Financial Aid at Cloud County Community College.

Our discussion centered around student loans, Pell Grants, and the newly-developed Academic Competitiveness and

SMART grants. I appreciate the time these administrators took to share with me their expertise. I look forward to continuing this dialogue and including other financial aid officials in the future.

Discussing World Trade with Secretary of Agriculture and Trade Representative

This week I met with Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns and U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman for a discussion with the House Agriculture Committee about the Doha round of agricultural trade negotiations going on at the World Trade Organization. My fellow members and I shared our frustrations with the European Union's market access policies. Representative Portman and Secretary Johanns gave a very realistic report. There are lots of challenges and difficulties between now and the resolution of the issues. Johanns said members of Congress will know in plenty of time whether there will be a Doha round deal before they begin writing a farm bill in 2007.

Celebrating St. Patrick's Day in Rush Center

This weekend I joined residents of Rush Center for their annual St. Patrick's Day parade. St. Patrick's Day is celebrated on March 17 as the anniversary of the death of St. Patrick in the fifth century. This day has been observed by the Irish as a religious holiday for thousands of years. The first St. Patrick's Day parade was held in New York City on March 17, 1762, for Irish soldiers serving in the English military.

Meeting with Hays Rotarians and Touring Geoprobe Systems in Salina

Before heading back to Washington, D.C., I attended my hometown Rotary Club in Hays for their program dealing with

mental health awareness. Then, en route to the airport, I met with Mel Kejr, President, and Tom Christy, Vice President, to tour the Geoprobe campus and manufacturing facility in Salina. Geoprobe is a local company that was started in 1986 by the Kejr family and employs approximately 120 people. The first Geoprobe machine was built for the Environmental Protection Agency in 1988. Geoprobe produces high quality, hydraulically powered, direct push machines that are used to perform a variety of soil core, soil gas and groundwater samplings. I appreciate Mr. Kejr and Mr. Christy taking time to show me around their facility and explain their products.

From Hope to Paradise: Continuing My Big First Listening Tour

As part of my Big First Tour, I was in Larned last week with the Ft. Larned Lions Club hosting my town hall meeting for Pawnee County. Today I am making downtown stops in Scott City in Scott County and Dighton in Lane County. On Friday I will be in Nemaha, Marshall, Washington and Republic counties. Visit my website at www.house.gov/moranks01/ for times and locations of the remaining stops of my Big First Listening Tour, scheduled to end in Paradise on Friday, March 24.

In the Office

Kathy Sexton, Director of the Lee Richardson Zoo in Garden City, and Kathy Tolbert, Director of Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure in Salina, were in my office this week representing the American Zoo and Aquarium Association to talk about new technology that would allow zoos around the world to share information. Doug Story and Ed McKechnie of Pittsburg were in representing Watco to discuss the Kansas and Oklahoma railroad Salina sub rail rehabilitation project that consists of track from Salina to Osborne. Watco will make a \$5.7 million investment in the Salina sub rail and expects the last phase of the project to be completed in 2009.

Curtis Steenbock of Longford, Lynda Foster of Ft. Scott and Mike Bodenhausen of Mascoutah were in my office representing the Kansas Dairy Association to express their concerns regarding environmental and immigration issues facing the Kansas dairy industry, as well as their priorities for the new farm bill. University of Kansas Chancellor Robert Hemenway, Provost David Shulenburg, Executive Vice Chancellor Paul Carttar, Associate Dean Paul D'Anieri and Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at KU Medical Center James Voogt were in to discuss federal priorities for the university. The Chancellor shared his vision for KU Medical Center to connect cancer doctors throughout the state

to keep them updated on all the newest breakthroughs.

Board members of the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers including Kendall Hodgson of Little River, Joe Kejr of Brookville, Paul Penner of Hillsboro, Dan Engler of Downs and John Thaemert of Sylvan Grove were in to talk about an economic loss assistance program, priorities for the next farm bill and the importance of research and development for Kansas wheat programs. Also with the group were Dana Hoffman and Dusti Fritz of the Association's Manhattan office. Steve Root of Lakin was in representing the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety Inspection Service to discuss concerns regarding food safety inspection regulations and inspector employment programs.

Several organization representatives were in my office this week to discuss the upcoming farm bill. Jim French of Partridge was in representing Oxfam America for this and to talk about rural development. Ken McCauley of White Cloud was in representing the National Corn Growers Association for this discussion as well as to express support of the ethanol industry. Lastly, Charles Cochran of Wichita was in to visit about the 2007 Farm Bill.

In representing the Kansas Public Transit Association were Ron Butts and Janlyn Nesbett of Topeka, Cliff Galante of Lawrence, Ron Straight of Hays and Lisa Loeb of Hutchinson to discuss the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act. Last year Kansas public transportation utilized more than 800 vehicles to provide more than 8 million rides. Kansas leaders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars were in to talk about enhancing the Montgomery GI Bill, improving veterans' health care and allowing retired veterans to receive both their retirement and disability pay in full. In with the group were Harold Garrett of Wichita, Larry Graham of Tribune, Phil Irby and McKinley Smith of Junction City, Tom Sanko of Dodge City, Kathy Osborn of Liberal, Dick Weston of Benton, Steve and June Phelps of Ransom, Charley Shoemaker of Leavenworth and Roy Taylor of Dighton. In from Topeka with the group were Darrell Bencken, Jefferson Lawson and Kenneth Stodgell.

Kansas representatives of the National Sorghum Producers were in to discuss the upcoming farm bill and to share their support for the ethanol industry and for retaining funding for Agricultural Research Services. The president of the organization, Greg Shelor of Minneola, was in with the group, as were Jeff Casten of Quenemo, Bill Greiving of Prairie View, Dave Erwin of Syracuse and Sue Hardman of Garnett. Ken Maginley of Wamego, Bob Reece of Council Grove, Stuart Lowry of Topeka and Donald Hellwig of Solomon were in with DS&O Rural Electric Cooperative Association to talk about issues with Consolidated Utilities' private bid to provide electric distribution service to Ft. Riley.

Representatives from the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, Sunflower Electric and Searles Valley Minerals were in to discuss concerns regarding inaccessibility to railroad service in Kansas. Representatives included Dana Hoffman and Justin Gilpin of Manhattan, Paul Penner of Hillsboro, Charles Ayers of Leoti, Bill McGinn of Overland Park and John White of Independence. James Daniels of Wichita was in the office representing the Interstate Oil and Gas Compact Commission to talk about capping of orphan wells and expansion of U.S. oil and gas exploration. His wife Lois accompanied him.

In representing the International Association of Chiefs of Police were Chief Mike Watson of the Riley County Police Department in Manhattan and John Douglass of Overland Park to talk about preventive law enforcement and immigration. Susan Estes and Sandy Johnson of Overland Park, Kurt Balthazor of Pittsburg and Mike Vallaro of Lenexa were in representing Mid-America Manufacturing Technology Center to visit about innovation and efficiency in small- and medium-sized manufacturing companies. Russell Plaschka of Moran and Karmey Olson of Topeka were in to advocate for the importance of career and technical education for Kansas students.

Representatives from the Kansas Psychological Association visited my office to discuss mental health parity. Attending the meeting were Gary Hawley and Bruce and Judy Nystrom of Wichita, as well as Theresa Coddington of Overland Park. Greg Hildenbrand of Topeka, Director of Life Star of Kansas, was in to talk about air medical services. Life Star of Kansas provides air medical services in the northeast Kansas area, including Junction City in the First District. Paula Peters and Sandy Procter with Kansas State University Research and Extension in Manhattan were in my office to discuss the success of food and nutrition programs in Kansas.

Pam Scott of Topeka, Jerry and Judy Witt of Fort Scott and Mike Turnbull of Emporia were in representing the National Funeral Directors Association to talk about small business and tax issues concerning burial trusts. Representatives from the Kansas Association of Community Action Programs were in my office to discuss the importance of the Community Services Block Grant and funding for other social programs such as Head Start. Attending the meeting were Joan Burke and Linda Broyles of Girard, Dianne Lawson and Tawny Stottlemire of Topeka, Lu Hangle of Hiawatha, Athena Lanter of Sabetha and Dale Tower of Augusta.

Steve and Cynthia Hayes of Oberlin were in to talk about a federal shield law to protect reporters from being forced to divulge sources in courts of law. The Hayes' publish the Oberlin, Goodland, Colby, Norton, St. Francis and Bird City newspapers in northwest Kansas. This week I also met with several county commissioners from the First District while they were in Washington, D.C., with the Kansas Association of Counties. Also stopping by my office was Walter Berry of Wichita.

Several Kansans were in my office this week for tours of the Capitol building. Kathy Olson of Liberal came by for a tour, as did Belinda Sharp of Hutchinson with her children, Luke, Laci and Adam. Peggy Schoepf of Haven was in with her grandson, Jerami Slayden of Lincolnville. Also in was a group from Haven High School in Haven, including Janessa Black, Jill Bowman, Alissa Haney, Bethany Hodgson, Rhedi Leiker, John and Nathan Pohl, Roger Wait and Christopher Carithers, with their instructor, Richard Kaufman and his wife, Barbara. Dr. Tim Poling and his wife, Margaret, of St. Francis also toured the Capitol this week, as did Tami Erwin of Syracuse.

Very truly yours,

Jerry